

18. BLUE ROCK PIGEONS FORAGING ON TAMARIND LEAVES

On April 9, 2000 I was observing birds in my garden when I noticed four blue rock pigeons *Columba livia* flying into a tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*) tree. As I observed them, I was surprised to see them plucking at the tender newly sprouted tamarind leaves. Initially I thought they were just plucking at the leaves, but on a closer look I saw that they were eating the young leaves. Tamarind leaves are sour to taste. It is difficult for me to tell whether it was the taste of the leaves that had attracted the blue

rock pigeons or whether they were eating them for fibre.

This is the first time in my 20 years of bird watching that I have seen blue rock pigeons foraging on tender tamarind leaves.

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19. UNUSUAL NESTING MATERIAL IN THE NEST  
OF BLUE ROCK PIGEON *COLUMBA LIVIA* GMELIN

The blue rock pigeon *Columba livia* is one of the most common birds in the urban environment of Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh). It breeds throughout the year and nests near human habitations on rafters, in corners of ceilings among other places. I have noticed many nests in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad on roof tops, window sills, apartments, and places of worship, made entirely of twigs, leaves and feathers.

During May 1999, I made an interesting observation on the nesting behaviour of the blue rock pigeon in my hostel building at Secunderabad. On May 22, 1999, I came across a pair of blue rock pigeons bringing nest material into my room. The nest was being built on top of an almirah, a regular nesting site of pigeons. At 0630 hrs, the half built nest was seen to be made up of dried neem leaves, twigs, feathers, roots, grass and dried pods of *Acacia*. After two hours, I was surprised to see ten black hairpins, a ring, a black hair clip, and a bangle, all made of black metal, and a key ring, bottle top, and three pink aluminium bangles,

in the nest. All these items except the bangle had been picked up from my table while I was away. It is interesting that the birds preferred metal items. The birds were found in the nest for two days before they abandoned it. Another abandoned nest, with six pink bangles, a black hair clip and fifteen black hairpins was found on May 3, 1999.

There have been notes on the peculiar nesting habits of urban dwelling birds. Lamba (1963) and Alterogi and Davis (1976) described extensively the urbanization in the nest building of house crow *Corvus splendens splendens* in various cities. Lamba (1968) has reported a wire nest of red-vented bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*. This shows that the rapid changes in the urban environment affect the nesting behaviour of birds.

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